UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION CODE

METHODOLOGY - UNIC

RECOMMENDATION No.8/Rev.1, *adopted by the*
Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures

Geneva, March 1992

ECE/TRADE/175

PREAMBLE

The Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, at its seventh session in February 1978, agreed to approve Recommendation No.8 "Common Access Number" providing a unique reference number for each international trade transaction linking goods with documents and replacing other references by the new number where feasible. In 1989, an ad hoc group led by United Kingdom was asked to analyse the experience of the Recommendation No.8 implementation. It was decided that as written, Recommendation No.8 would not ensure that the reference construction would guarantee uniqueness for all consignments. It was also decided to take into account developments since its publication in 1978. The ad hoc group presented its findings to the forty-fourth session of the Meeting of Experts on Procedures and Documentation (GE.2) (September 1991) in the form of a revised Recommendation No.8 with the change of the title for "Unique Identification Code Methodology".

RECOMMENDATION

The Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, at its thirty-fourth session, in September 1991, agreed to recommend

1. to the parties responsible for international trade transactions at different stages the use of a Unique Identification Code created in accordance with the provisions set out hereafter;

2. to Governments and national trade facilitation organs

   2.1 the promotion of the acceptance of the Unique Identification Code Methodology, e.g. by adopting it in relevant national official or private documentary procedures, including national series of standardized documents used in international trade, trade data interchange messages and, where possible, in the marking of shipments;

   2.2 the reporting on action taken to give effect to the present version of Recommendation No.8.

The Working Party also requested the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe to send the Recommendation to the Executive Secretaries of the other United Nations regional economic commissions asking them to transmit it to interested Governments in their respective regions.

PARTICIPATION IN THE THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY

At the session representatives attended from:

Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Canada; Czech and Slovak Federal Republic; Denmark; Germany; Finland; France; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Malta;Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Romania; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Turkey; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America. Representatives from Australia; Brazil; Gabon; Japan; Nigeria; Saudi Arabia; South Africa and Senegal participated under Article 11 of the Commission's terms of reference.

The session was attended by representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) as well as by representatives of the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations:

European Economic Community (EEC), Universal Postal Union (UPU), International Maritime Organization (IMO), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Central Office for International Railway Transport (OCTI), Customs Co-operation Council (CCC), International Air Transport Association (IATA), International Association of Ports and Harbours (IAPH), International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), International Data Exchange Association (I.D.E.A.), International Federation of Freight Forwarders Association (FIATA), International Railway Transport Committee (CIT), International Road Transport Union (IRU), International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Union of Railways (UIC), Korean Committee for Simplification of International Trade Procedures (KOSTPRO) with headquarters located in the Republic of Korea.

UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION CODE METHODOLOGY

I. BACKGROUND

1. In international trade, the parties responsible for or involved in each stage of the transaction, from the placing of the order to the delivery of the goods, create and receive numerous references which are shown on documents, included in EDI messages as well as in shipping marks.

2. The servicing of such numerous references is overall a resource intensive activity which gives rise to errors when transferred or transmitted; identification can also be a complicated function without the certainty that the required reference has been quoted correctly. Moreover, the large number and divergent structures of references used makes it difficult - in practice - to link the shipping marks on the goods to references shown on documents or to adopt them as a universal identification in all transport modes.

3. In addition to such factors which arise mainly in connection with traditional documentary procedures, it now has to be taken into consideration that Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and transmission techniques are and will continue to replace traditional documentary practices in many enterprises and foreign trade organizations. EDI needs a unique reference methodology as a key to information whilst the optimum benefit of trade community systems will never be realised if all participants seek to overlay messages with their own generated references for particular functions or activities.

4. Taking such factors into account, the ECE/WP.4 ad-hoc group delegated to revise Recommendation No.8 endeavoured to develop a unique consignment reference number (UCRN) with the objective of replacing most references used by the parties in international and national trade. The proposed references needed to be unique and easily recognisable, comply with present international standards and be compatible with standard fields in documents and messages. Parties involved in the different stages of international trade transactions were supportive of reducing the number and variety of references currently used only if the generated references did not introduce any risks.

5. Understandably, parties did not wish to discontinue their own reference systems unless a system could be proposed which would be unique in construction and be recognised internationally with a potential use. Given such circumstances - and taking into consideration the 17 character length of a UCRN - it was suggested that the concept of a COMMON ACCESS REFERENCE (CAR) be updated. As the title of Common Access Reference was already in use in the UNTDED and for a different purpose, the title of Recommendation No.8 was changed to Unique Identification Code methodology (UNIC).

II. SCOPE

6. The unique identification code methodology is a unique referencing system for use between parties as a means of referring to a trade transaction and/or consignment. The objective is to reduce the number and different styles of references. It is not intended as a method of product identification.

7. The structure of the UNIC incorporates the requirements or replaces many if not all other trade referencing systems. While the UNIC system establishes itself, its flexibility allows for all parties to maintain their own reference systems for internal purposes (as it is anticipated that any transferal by users from their present systems to the UNIC will take time).

III. FIELD OF APPLICATION

8. The UNIC copes with all eventualities within a trade transaction and consignment including:

- a transaction consisting of one consignment. In this context the UNIC (generated by the buyer or seller) is the unique reference for the transaction and can also be used to identify the consignment.

- a transaction consisting of more than one consignment. In this situation the original UNIC (identifying the transaction) cannot be reused to identify the individual consignment as it would not remain unique. Therefore new UNICs need to be established to identify these consignments. The new UNICs identifying the consignments, could be generated by the buyer, seller, or provider of service, and the reference part may relate to the original transaction UNIC.

- a consignment consisting of more than one transaction. In this situation the UNICs established to identify the individual transactions cannot be reused to the overall consignment as they would not remain unique. Therefore, a new UNIC needs to be established as the prime reference to uniquely identify the overall consignment. This consignment UNIC could be generated by the buyer, seller or provider of service and is used to refer to that consignment.

9. When a transaction is changed by way of contractual obligation then a new UNIC needs to be allocated, which could be structured in such a manner that it relates to the original transaction UNIC. All parties involved should be notified of its amendment. When a transaction consist of more than one consignment and one or more of those consignments are redirected to another party by the buyer, the UNIC that identifies the original transaction should remain the same.

10. When a consignment is physically changed and necessitates a further movement, then a new UNIC should be created. However, if the ownership of the consignment is transferred without a change to the structure or the content of the consignment, the consignment UNIC should remain the same.

11. Unforseen changes to agreed procedures, force majeure, or other such changes to the individual consignment should not affect the consignment UNIC number.

III. FIELD OF APPLICATION (cont.)

12. For the purpose of this Recommendation the following terms and definitions are used:

IV. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- TRANSACTION. A transaction is an agreement between two or more parties, it is established when the buyer and seller are discussing and subsequently accept a contract for the supply of goods or related services e.g. insurance or banking services. A transaction can consist of one or many consignment(s)/service(s).

- CONSIGNMENT. A consignment relates to the goods which are physically appropriated or set aside for despatch according to a single transport document or electronic message. The goods themselves can be referred to as a consignment or part of a consignment. A consignment can, in certain circumstances, include goods from more than one transaction.

13. The UNIC replaces the CAR and consists of a combination of three UNTDED data elements, which should comprise only alphanumeric characters and no punctuation or other marks. The structure is as follows:

V. STRUCTURE OF THE UNIC

1. 3055 Code list responsible agency, coded	an..3
2. 3039 Party identification, coded	an..17
3. 1154 Reference number	an..35

In UNIC, data elements 3039 and 1154 are restricted in length as indicated below.

14. When appearing on documents based on the UN Layout Key (UNLK), the UNIC should be placed on two lines (UNLK L 06 and L 07 respectively) and in UNLK positions P 63-80 and the data elements should be separated by obliques (/), each taking one character position.

15. In electronic data interchange when using UN/EDIFACT standards, the UNIC should be qualified as necessary.

16. The following is a description of the function of each of the data elements as used within the UNIC:

- 3055 Code list responsible agency, coded, is a reference consisting of up to 3 characters. This data element identifies the agency issuing the party identification code. The agency identifier codes are included in the code list issued by the ECE/WP.4 secretariat.

V. STRUCTURE OF THE UNIC (cont.)

- 3039 Party identification, coded. This data element should normally be restricted to a maximum of 13 characters. However, it may be extended to a maximum of 17 characters on condition that the length of the Reference number (1154) is adjusted so that the total length of 3039 and 1154 does not exceed 30 characters (not counting the oblique).

- 1154 Reference number, is restricted to a maximum of 17 characters with further restrictions depending on the length of Party identification as noted above. This data element identifies uniquely the trade transaction or consignment within the company identified by the Party identification code. The Reference should be created and administrated by the company identified in that code and must be a unique reference within that company.

17. In a stable community or specific environment parties can agree to use a shorter reference, utilising only the Party identification code (3039) and the Reference number (1154), or only the Reference number (1154).

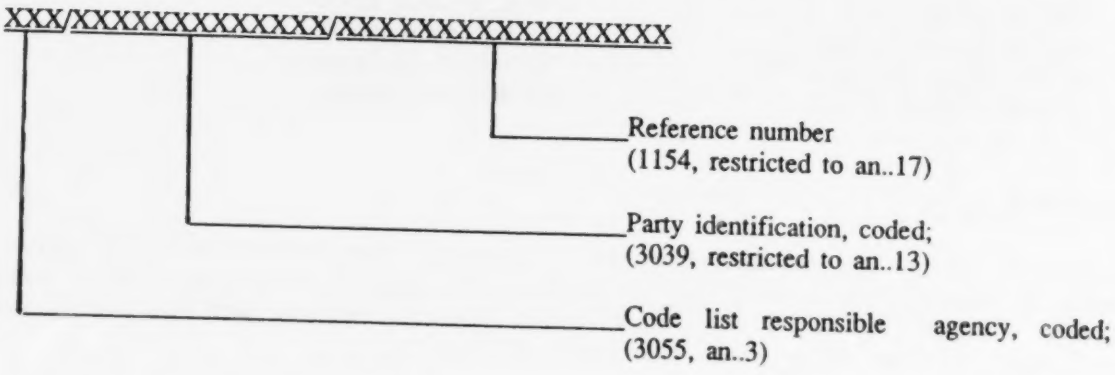
VI. BAR CODING

18. When bar coding the maximum number of characters that can be encoded depends on several factors, primarily, type of bar code, printing technique, reading equipment and symbology required. For parties wishing to bar code it is important that the appropriate symbology and reading equipment are chosen.

ANNEX *

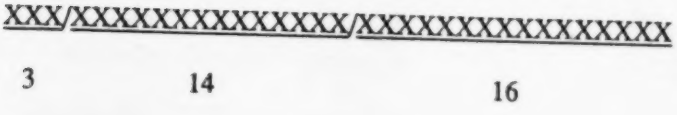
EXAMPLES OF THE UNIC APPLICATION

1. The UNIC is constructed using a combination of three data elements:



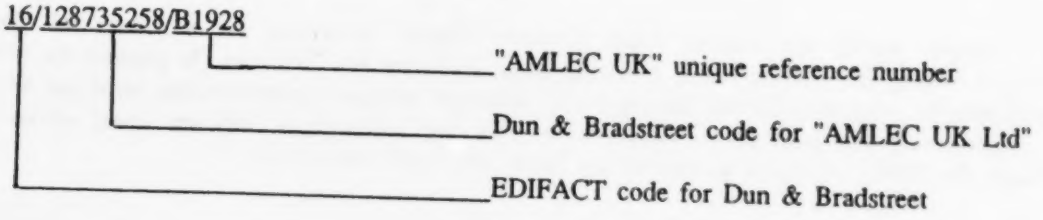
2. Where the Party identification code must be extended beyond the restriction of 13 characters (such as is the case with the French SIRET code) up to a possible maximum of 17 characters, the maximum length for the Reference number (1154) must be reduced accordingly:

SIRET (France)



It is envisaged that coding agencies requiring more than 13 characters for the party identification code are unlikely to be used by companies using the full 17 characters reference.

3. For many organizations the adoption of a 35 character reference may not be necessary or desirable particularly for documentary purpose. The proposed methodology does allow for the existing 17 characters references as indicated below:


16/128735258/B1928
"AMLEC UK" unique reference number
Dun & Bradstreet code for "AMLEC UK Ltd"
EDIFACT code for Dun & Bradstreet

*This annex is not a part of revised Recommendation No.8

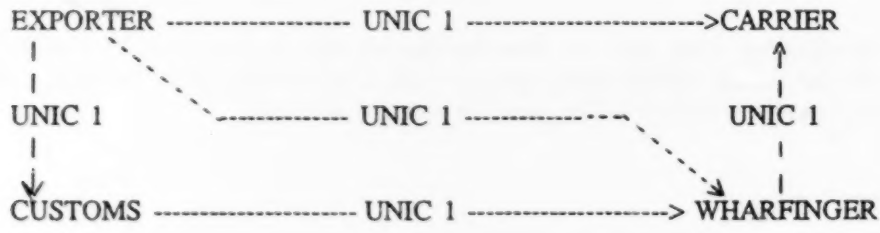
4. For internal correspondence within "AMLEC UK Ltd", or where agreed between parties, only part of the UNIC need be quoted (B1928). However, it is important to note that while "AMLEC" do not use 35 characters in UNIC, the full 35 characters must be catered for in instances where a third party supplies the reference.

5. If the above transaction UNIC consisted of three consignments then new UNICs can be generated by the buyer, seller or provider of service with the agreement of the originator of the transaction UNIC (AMLEC UK Ltd). The reference numbers of these new identifiers should relate logically to the original transaction UNIC and the following method is suggested:

16/128735258/B1928	-	The transaction UNIC
16/128735258/B1928C1	-	The first consignment
16/128735258/B1928C2	-	The second consignment
16/128735258/B1928C3	-	The third consignment

EXAMPLE I

6. In this example the exporter completes the Customs export documentation, but employs a carrier to physically move the goods. The exporter has supplied consignment UNIC 1 which is used by all parties as the Customs entry number, Carrier's reference and wharfinger's Unique consignment reference and exporter's consignment reference.

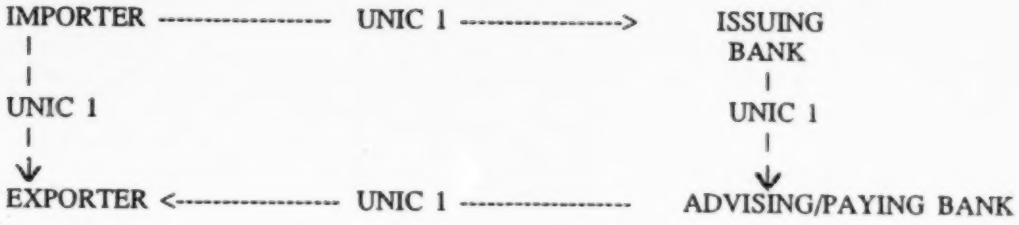


6.1 Cargo booking/acknowledgement UNIC 1,	Exporter	->	Carrier
6.2 Customs data input/acceptance UNIC 1,	Exporter	->	Customs
6.3 Cargo receiving activity and port inventory system input UNIC 1,	Exporter	->	Wharfinger
6.4 Arrival input UNIC 1,	Customs	->	Wharfinger
6.5 Notification UNIC 1,	Wharfinger	->	Carrier

Compared with current referencing, the use of UNICs reduces the number of references from 4 to 1.

EXAMPLE II

7. This example shows the current (and potential future) procedure for a Letter of Credit transaction, involving the Issuing bank, Advising bank, Exporter and Importer. At present the UNIC would probably be generated by the Issuing bank, although, without agreement this need not be the case. It is perceived that with the development of EDI the Exporter or Importer could advise the Issuing bank the UNIC reference as part of the Letter of Credit instruction.

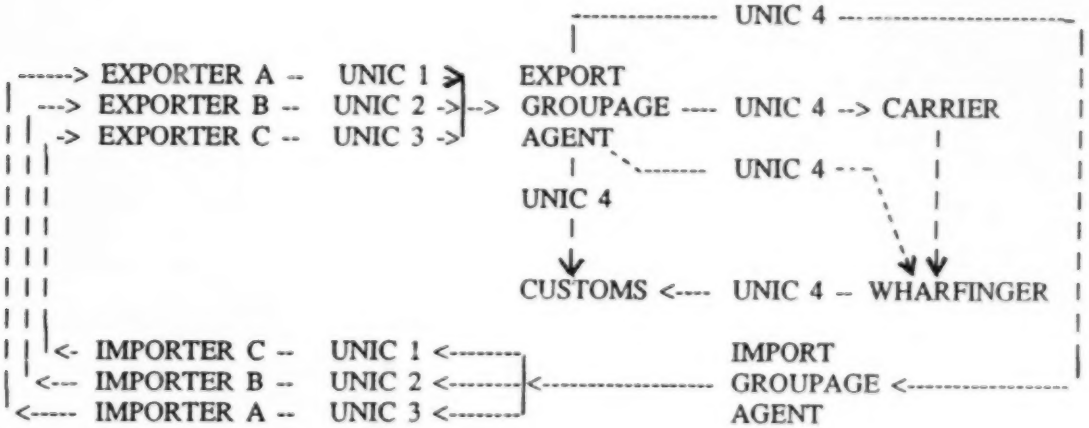


7.1 Application,	Importer	->	Issuing bank
7.2 Letter of Credit,	Issuing bank	->	Advising bank
7.3 Letter of Credit issued,	Advising bank	->	Exporter
7.4 Export documents,	Exporter	->	Advising/Paying bank
7.5 Notification of receipt,	Importer	->	Exporter

Note: In future the exporter (or importer) could generate the UNIC which could cater for the movement as well as the banking aspects of the transaction. Compared with current referencing, the use of UNICs reduces the number of references from 12 to 1.

EXAMPLE III

8. In this example three exporters employ a groupage agent to carry out all Customs formalities. The groupage agent then sub-contracts a carrier to physically move the consignments (UNIC 1, 2 and 3) which have been consolidated and re-identified as UNIC 4. Once UNIC 4 has been collected by the import groupage agent and has cleared Customs it is deconsolidated and distributed to the individual importers as UNIC 1, 2 and 3. For the purpose of this example it was not felt necessary to include either the Customs authorities or the port authority at the port of import.



8.1 Cargo booking/acknowledgement,	Exporters	-->	Exp. agent
8.2 Load unit booking/acknowledgement,	Exp. agent	-->	Carrier
8.3 Customs export data input,	Exp. agent	-->	Customs
8.4 Cargo receiving activity and port inventory system input,	Exp. agent	-->	Wharfinger
8.5 Arrival input,	Wharfinger	-->	Customs
8.6 Cargo acknowledgement,	Exp. agent	-->	Imp. agent
8.7 De-consolidation of goods,	Imp. agent	-->	Importers
8.8 Confirmation of arrival,	Importers	-->	Exporters

Compared with current referencing, the use of UNICs reduces the number of references from 19 to 4.